

Testimony to the Public Safety Committee- February 7, 2013

Good morning. Thank you Mr.Chairman. My name is Thomas Ronalter. I am the interim Fire Chief for the City of New Britain Fire Department.

I am here to speak on House Bill 6015.

- We agree on the need to make sure that citizens we protect do not get charged for emergency calls.
- The City of New Britain has proposed and the Common Council passed an anti-blight ordinance addressing the issue of *hot spots* – rental properties that generate repeated nuisance calls requiring a response of emergency personnel.
- The New Britain ordinance does NOT charge a resident for a 911 emergency calls.
- This ordinance involves nuisance calls like college off-campus parties, excessive noise or drug activity.
- Nuisance calls take emergency personnel away from responding to actual emergencies.
- In New Britain, 2 percent of the properties generate 30 percent of the calls to emergency services.
- The hearing today provides an important opportunity to talk about that ordinance and to address some of the issues and I appreciate this opportunity.

- We applaud the proposed bill, and the legislature for considering a bill that would prohibit municipalities from charging the public for emergency services.
- New Britain Mayor O'Brien, Police Chief James Wardwell and myself know that public safety is always the first responsibility of city government. This means that all residents must and will have access to emergency services.
- The New Britain ordinance instituted a fee to landlords if they fail to solve issues on their properties that generate these nuisance calls and take emergency personnel away from responding to actual emergencies.

In closing, let me say no one will ever be charged for calling 911.

- If there is a medical emergency, fire or crime taking place, it is vital that our residents call for help. The Public Safety professionals in New Britain will respond.
- The City has undertaken an information campaign to make sure the residents of New Britain understand this fact.
- While New Britain's Hot Spot ordinance is not a silver bullet solution, it is another vital tool in the toolbox to enhance public safety.
- Thank you again to the Chairman and the committee members for considering my comments.